

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L THESSALONIKI 0115

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PLOS, GR, TU

SUBJECT: THESSALONIKI PREFECT COMMENTS ON U.S.-GREEK-TURKISH
RELATIONS

1. SUMMARY: THESSALONIKI PREFECT, CONSTANTINE PYLARINOS, A CAPABLE ADMINISTRATOR AND FORMER CONFIDANT OF PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS DURING PARIS EXILE DAYS, HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY EMBITTERED OVER WHAT HE PERCEIVES TO BE UNITED STATES INABILITY OR UNWILLINGNESS TO HALT SLIDE IN GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS. IN CONVERSATION WITH CONSUL GENERAL MAY 5, PYLARINOS EMPHASIZED THAT GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS, ESPECIALLY AGEAN DISPUTE, WAS PARAMOUNT SUBJECT OF CONCERN TO ENTIRE GREEK PEOPLE; CLAIMED THAT GREEKS WOULD RATHER FIGHT THAN CEDE ONE INCH OF CONTINENTAL SHELF; AND ASSERTED THAT THERE WAS GROUNDSWELL OF DISAFFECTION WITHIN GREEK MILITARY OVER INABILITY OF WESTERN POWERS, ESPECIALLY U.S., TO PRESERVE STATUS QUO IN AGEAN. PYLARINOS BELIEVES THAT ONE MISSTEP BY TURKISH RESEARCH VESSEL SISMİK WOULD RESULT IN GREEK MILITARY RETALIATION. HE BELIEVES THAT GREEK GOVERNMENT COULD NOT SURVIVE PUBLIC OUTCRY AND PRESSURE FROM GREEK MILITARY IN FACE OF FURTHER TURKISH PROVOCATIONS IF IT SIMPLY SAT BACK
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AND TOOK CONCILIATORY APPROACH. END SUMMARY.

2. I HAD ONE HOUR MEETING WITH THESSALONIKI NOMARCH (PREFECT), CONSTANTINE PYLARINOS, MORNING MAY 5. PYLARINOS IS CARAMANLIS APPOINTEE TO THIS IMPORTANT PREFECTURE AND, IN ADDITION TO HAVING SERVED IN CARAMANLIS POLITICAL OFFICE IN LATE FIFTIES AND EARLY SIXTIES, HE WAS ALSO IN PARIS DURING CARAMANLIS

EXILE THERE. WHILE PYLARINOS DOES NOT CLAIM SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO PM'S THINKING, HE IS SERIOUS, SEEMS WELL PLUGGED #. THIS CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE JUST AFTER HIS RETURN FROM A FIVE DAY ABSENCE IN ATHENS.

3. PYLARINOS SAID HE RETURNED FROM ATHENS STRUCK BY THE WIDESPREAD DISENCHANTMENT HE HAD FOUND OVER U.S.-GREEK RELATIONS, ESPECIALLY AMONG GREEK MILITARY. PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF DISAFFECTION HE SAID WAS FEELING THAT, IRRESPECTIVE OF FACTS, BACKGROUND, OR WHO WAS RIGHT, IN ANY SITUATION INVOLVING CONFLICT OF GREEK AND TURKISH INTERESTS, UNITED STATES AND OTHER WESTERN POWERS WOULD SIMPLY COUNSEL RESTRAINT, CONCILIATION AND TALKS RATHER THAN TAKING FIRMER ACTION TO SET THINGS STRAIGHT. SINCE WORLD WAR TWO THIS HANDS-OFF APPROACH BY THE GREAT POWERS HAD LED TO THE UNJUSTIFIED PERSECUTION AND EXPULSION OF THE GREEK COMMUNITY FROM ISTANBUL; GREECE'S HUMILIATION IN CYPRUS; AND NOW PRESSURES ARE BEING PUT ON GREECE TO ABANDON AGEAN STATUS QUO WHICH HAS EXISTED FOR FIFTY YEARS. GREEK PEOPLE WERE UNANIMOUSLY TIRED OF CONCESSIONS, PYLARINOS SAID, AND HE PREDICTED THAT ANY GREEK GOVERNMENT WHICH CEDED AS MUCH AS "ONE ROCK" OF AGEAN TO TURKS WOULD BE SWEEPED OUT BY MILITARY. OVERWHELMING GREEK OPINION, HE CLAIMED, IS THAT WAR IS PREFERABLE TO ANY FURTHER CONCESSION TO TURKISH DEMANDS AND A MISSTEP BY THE SISMIK COULD TRIP SUCH A WAR.

4. COMMENTING FURTHER ON GREEK MILITARY ATTITUDES, PYLARINOS SAID THAT BITTERNESS OVER PERCEIVED U.S. UNWILLINGNESS OR INABILITY TO HALT SLIDE IN GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS HAS LED
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TO CHANGING OPINIONS ON MERITS OF REMAINING IN THE WEST. DESPITE STRONG ANTI-COMMUNIST ATTITUDES ON INTERNAL QUESTIONS, PYLARINOS SAID, HE WAS SURPRISED AT NUMBER OF MILITARY PREPARED TO RE-EXAMINE ENTIRE GREEK INTERNATIONAL POSTURE.

5. TO ARREST THIS ALARMING TREND, PYLARINOS CONTINUED, U.S. MUST TAKE MORE POSITIVE STEPS TO MAINTAIN PEACE BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY. SPECIFICALLY, HE FELT WE OUGHT TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT TURKS ECONOMICALLY AND MILITARILY; BUT IN EXCHANGE WE MUST ELICIT TURKISH GUARANTEES FOR GREECE'S PRESENT BORDERS, BOTH ON LAND AND ON CONTINENTAL SHELF. FAILING THIS, HE FEARED, EVENTS WOULD EVENTUALLY SLIDE TOWARDS EITHER WAR OR FUNDAMENTAL REALIGNMENT OF GREECE'S FOREIGN POLICY, OR POSSIBLY A COMBINATION OF BOTH.

6. ASKED ABOUT CYPRUS, PYLARINOS SAID THAT THIS WAS THE ONE LAST AREA WHERE AS SIGN OF GOOD WILL GREEKS WERE WILLING TO TAKE CONCILIATORY APPROACH TO TURKS. HE MENTIONED A POSSIBLE TERRITORIAL SETTLEMENT GRANTING AS HIGH AS THIRTY-TWO PERCENT

TO TURKISH CYPRIOT CONTROL, WHICH HE SAID WAS CERTAINLY
MORE THAN THEY DESERVED.

7. COMMENT: SURELY MUCH OF WHAT PYLARINOS HAD TO SAY WAS
DESIGNED TO DRAMATIZE GREEK SENTIMENTS AT THIS TIME. HOWEVER,
GIVEN FACT THAT HE IS A RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL AND NOT, TO MY
KNOWLEDGE, PRONE TO HYSTERICAL DIATRIBES, I WAS STRUCK BY THE
INTENSITY AND APPARENT CONVICTION OF HIS COMMENTS. AS FOR THE
PICTURE PYLARINOS DREW OF CURRENT GREEK MILITARY ATTITUDES,
I HAVE NO RPT NO CORROBORATING INDICATIONS OF DISAFFECTION ON
THE SCALE HE DESCRIBES, ALTHOUGH IT IS APPARENT FROM THE FEW
REMARKS WE HAVE HEARD LATELY THAT THE INITIAL EUPHORIA OVER
PRESIDENT CARTER'S ELECTION HAS LARGELY DISSIPATED.
NEGROPONTE

NOTE BY OC/T: # AS RECEIVED.
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